

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2271

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1171

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GT

SUBJECT: LAUGERUD CLAIMS OPPONENTS WOULD BRING COMMUNISM TO GUATEMALA

SUMMARY: IN A WELL-DELIVERED BUT DEMAGOGIC FEBRUARY 27 TV SPEECH, GOVERNMENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE LAUGERUD CHARGED THAT HIS OPPOSITION WOULD BRING COMMUNISM TO GUATEMALA IF ELECTED. ALONG WITH OTHER RECENT RED-BAITING TACTICS, THE SPEECH PROBABLY WILL HAVE SOME SUCCESS IN DRIVING VOTERS AWAY FROM RIOS MONTT. END SUMMARY.

1. IN HIS MOST HARD-HITTING TV ADDRESS TO DATE, THE GOVERNMENT COALITION'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, GEN. KJELL LAUGERUD, TOLD GUATEMALANS THAT DURING THE COURSE OF THE CAMPAIGN EACH OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES HAD PRESENTED SOLUTIONS FOR THE NATIONS PROBLEMS, BUT THAT THERE WERE OTHER "CANDIDATES" WHO HAD "HIDDEN UNDER THE TABLE" THEIR TRUE OBJECTIVES. ACCORDING TO LAUGERUD, THESE "CANDIDATES" WHOM HE NEVER IDENTIFIED SPECIFICALLY, HAD FAILED TO TELL THE PEOPLE THAT THE "STRUCTURAL CHANGES" WHICH THEY PROPOSED REPRESENTED A "CHANGE FROM DEMOCRACY TO COMMUNISM." LAUGERUD RECALLED THAT CASTRO AND ALLENDE HAD SIMILARLY PROMISED "STRUCTURAL CHANGE," AND CONTENDED THAT THE GUATEMALAN "EXTREME LEFT" HAD CHOSEN CUBA AND THE USSR AS ITS POLITICAL MODELS. LAUGERUD CHARGED THAT TRUE AIMS OF THE "EXTREME LEFT"

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INCLUDED THE ELIMINATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY AND RELIGIOUS

FREEDOM, WHOLESale FIRING OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AND
IMPOSITION OF A UNIFORM SCHOOL TEXT FOR PURPOSES OF IDEOLOGICAL
INDOCTRINATION.

2. REJECTING THE OPPOSITIONS CRITICISMS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S
"INCAPACITY," LAUGERUD ASSERTED THAT HIS OPPONENTS HAD
OFFERED NO CONCRETE SOLUTIONS TO THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.
IN RESPONSE TO THE OPPOSITION'S PREDICTIONS OF FRAUD,"WHICH WE
SURELY WILL CONTINUE TO HEAR AFTER THE ELECTION," LAUGERUD SUGGESTED
THAT POLITICIANS ARE FRAUDS WHEN THEY PRESENT THEMSELVES AS THE
"OPPOSITION" WHILE THEY "RECEIVE THE TUTELAGE AND FAVORS OF THE
GOVERNMENT"(A REFERENCE TO RENE DE LEON SCHLOTTER, SEE GUATEMALA
1150). THE GOVERNMENT CANDIDATE CONCLUDED BY CALLING UPON HIS
LISTERS TO VOTE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM WHICH HE REPRESENTED
AND TO REJECT THE "COMMUNISM WHICH THREATENS US ONCE AGAIN."

3. COMMENT: LAUGERUD OFTEN HAS ADOPTED A SIMILARLY STRIDENT TONE
IN HIS SPEECHES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME HE
HAS LABELED HIS OPPOSITION AS "COMMUNIST" DURING A TV ADDRESS.
ALTHOUGH DEMAGOGIC, THE FEBRUARY 27 SPEECH WAS BETTER DELIVERED
THAN MOST OF LAUGERUD'S ADDRESSES, WHICH HAVE
LARGELY CONSISTED OF DRY PRESENTATIONS OF HIS PROGRAMS IN
FIELDS SUCH AS INDUSTRY, AGRICULTURE, HEALTH AND EDUCATION.
ALONG WITH OTHER RECENT RED-BAITING TACTICS, THE SPEECH
PROBABLY WILL HAVE SOME SUCCESS IN FRIGHTENING VOTERS AWAY
FROM RIOS MONTT. ANOTHER OUTSIDE POSSIBILITY IS THAT THE
RED SCARE CAMPAIGN COULD BE USED TO JUSTIFY A REFUSAL TO
ACCEPT A RIOS VICTORY. END COMMENT.
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